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Item 1 of the provisional agenda*
Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Application of an intergovernmental organization for observer status with the Economic and Social Council

Letter dated 30 May 2011 from the Chair of the International Anti-Corruption Academy International Transition Team** addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

The International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA) presents its compliments to the United Nations in general and the Economic and Social Council in particular and has the honour to recall that IACA, with its official seat in Laxenburg, Austria, but global outreach, gained the status of a fully fledged international organization effective 8 March 2011.

IACA, originally established by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Austria, the European Anti-Fraud Office and other stakeholders, is a pioneering institution in the field of anti-corruption. The Academy aims to promote the prevention of and fight against corruption and further the goals of the United Nations Convention against Corruption as well as all other relevant international and regional anti-corruption instruments, thus contributing to the strengthening of good governance and the rule of law.

In pursuing that objective, IACA will function as an independent centre of excellence by following a holistic, interdisciplinary, intercultural and intersectoral approach. Such a perspective seems necessary for tackling all the complexities of the offence, which is often linked to transnational threats, including organized crime, terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and human trafficking.

The components of IACA programmes and activities will mainly focus on:

(a) Providing anti-corruption education and training;

* E/2011/100 and Corr.1.

** Additional information on the organization has been deposited with the secretariat of the Economic and Social Council and can be examined by Member States upon request.

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(b) Undertaking and facilitating research into all aspects of corruption;

(c) Providing other relevant forms of technical assistance in the fight against corruption;

(d) Fostering international cooperation and networking.

According to its article XVIII, paragraph 3, the Agreement for the Establishment of the International Anti-Corruption Academy as an international organization enters into force 60 days after the deposit of the instruments of ratification, approval or accession by three States or international organizations. Therefore, following the completion of the ratification process by Austria, the European Public Law Organization and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, IACA, became, from a legal point of view, an international organization on 8 March 2011.

Currently, IACA has 55 members from all corners of the globe, 7 of which have already ratified the Agreement. In addition, two States have recently acceded to it. The Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, acting as the Depository of the Agreement, can provide detailed information on the status of IACA membership, including recent developments related to accessions and ratifications (as of 11 May 2011). For the latest status of signatures and ratifications please see the IACA website, at www.iacainfo.org (under "Partners").

Moreover, IACA has concluded various cooperation agreements with other international organizations, including the Organization of American States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the International Development Law Organization and other entities (such as the World Bank and the World Economic Forum), which share the same objectives in the fields of anti-corruption and good governance.

At the IACA inaugural conference, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, in explicitly pledging his full support to the Academy, along with many other high-level representatives from all over the globe, stated:

> The launch of the International Anti-Corruption Academy is a milestone in the efforts of the international community to fight corruption. It has great potential to advance the goals of the landmark United Nations Convention against Corruption.
>
> ...
>
> If we are serious about tackling corruption, we will use the Academy to the fullest.

We are hence more than grateful for the lasting achievements towards these goals that were accomplished until now and we are confident that the strong and fruitful collaboration with all our parties, signatories and stakeholders will further contribute to and safeguard the impact of IACA towards a more corruption-free and, subsequently, just world.

In accordance with rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Council, I have the honour to request the participation of IACA as an observer in all deliberations of the Council on questions that fall within the scope of IACA activities, including questions related to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

I look forward to your favourable response as we stand ready to establish a fruitful cooperation for the benefit of both sides and, ultimately, both of our constituencies.

(*Signed*) Martin **Kreutner**
Chair
International Transition Team

United Nations E/2011/124

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Substantive session of 2011
Geneva, 4-29 July 2011
Item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda*
High-level segment: annual ministerial review

Letter dated 22 June 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Togo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

I have the honour to transmit to you the report on the work of the African regional preparatory meeting on "The right to Education for All in Africa: Reinforcing quality and equity", held in Lomé on 12 April in preparation for the 2011 annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council, and to request that you have the present report circulated as a document of the Council under item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda for its 2011 substantive session.

At the regional preparatory meeting, the right to Education for All, quality and equity were considered from the perspective of the African countries as a contribution to the theme of the 2011 annual ministerial review: "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education".

The Government of Togo believes that the report will contribute significantly to the discussions on the theme of the 2011 ministerial review.

(*Signed*) Kodjo **Menan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* E/2011/100 and Corr.1.

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Annex to the letter dated 22 June 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Togo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council

Report of the work of the African regional preparatory meeting on "The right to Education for All in Africa: Reinforcing quality and equity"

Summary

Within the framework of the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council, an African regional meeting on the theme "The right to Education for All in Africa: Reinforcing quality and equity" was held in Lomé on 12 April 2011. It was jointly organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in collaboration with the Government of Togo. Multi-stakeholder consultations, in which high-level representatives participated, consisted of plenary meetings and panel discussions. More than 100 delegates took part.

Participants, including a number of ministers, considered the major education issues before Africa with regard to progress, challenges and the path to equity and a rights-based approach to inclusive quality education. They also reviewed country experiences and shared best practices with a view to ending inequities in education and achieving Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Key policy messages

The situation in Africa is a mixed picture.

Below are the key policy messages that emerged from the discussions:

Progress in Africa towards Education for All and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in education

- The current situation in Africa is hopeful, with an unparalleled number of girls and boys enrolled in school and the success of large-scale enrolment campaigns;
- Nonetheless, despite the determined efforts of Governments, 31 million children in sub-Saharan Africa are not enrolled in school and gross rates of enrolment in secondary school and higher education in 2010 were 34 and 6 per cent, respectively;
- A large number of primary school pupils cannot move ahead because they either drop out or have to repeat the school year.

Education and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals: Progress, challenges and the Path to Equity

- Lay the groundwork for involving all actors (teachers, civil society, communities, unions, parents, pupils) in reforming educational systems;

- Integrate the adaptation of schools to their environment; poverty reduction; gender issues; the values of solidarity, tolerance and citizenship; and the protection of vulnerable children into the partnership;
- Promote the political will and commitment to provide financial support for the reforms under way in the education sector.

Rights-based approach to inclusive quality education

- Political, cultural, material and, above all, educational factors go into improving quality, and lifelong initiatives are called for in each area. Actors must reach a consensus on the steps needed to ensure quality in order to raise the level of student performance;
- Poverty is a handicap to learning. The most vulnerable families will need assistance. Development partners can make a substantial contribution to the operation of school canteens;
- Develop a joint comprehensive education plan that incorporates teacher training, status, career development plans and working conditions.

Country experiences and best practices

- With a view to harmonizing educational policies, the pooling of resources and knowledge can constitute a strategy for accelerating Education for All and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;
- The adoption and adaptation of new models of school governance and administration, as well as new teaching and learning strategies, can contribute to the attainment of the agreed goals;
- Implementation of decisions and recommendations aimed at keeping pace with fresh initiatives and approaches on which consensus has been reached, as well as their follow-up and evaluation, will ensure success.

I. Introduction

In July 2011, the Economic and Social Council will conduct its fifth annual ministerial review in Geneva. This review will focus on the theme "Implementation of the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education".

On 12 April 2011, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, UNESCO, UNICEF and ECA organized, in collaboration with the Government of Togo, an African regional preparatory meeting on the theme "The right to Education for All in Africa: Reinforcing quality and equity".

More than 100 delegates took part in the meeting, including a number of ministers, senior representatives of African Government, experts from the United Nations system and other international organizations and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), intellectual and university circles and the private sector. The meeting provided an opportunity for African countries to contribute to the annual ministerial review, in particular through the sharing of best practices and lessons learned.

II. Work of the African regional preparatory meeting

A. Opening session and keynote address

The meeting was opened by His Excellency Mr. Gilbert Fossoun Houngbo, Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic, and featured a number of statements. In her welcome address, Ms. Essossimna Legzim-Balouki, Minister of Literacy and Primary and Secondary Education of the Togolese Republic, thanked the Economic and Social Council for choosing Togo as the host of its African regional preparatory meeting on education. She said that, despite the progress achieved, realizing Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals for education remained a great challenge for most African countries. Educational reforms were necessary and it was crucial for the meeting to formulate proposals to that end.

The Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council, His Excellency Ambassador Jan Grauls, said that the situation with regard to the internationally agreed education goals — the theme of the 2011 annual ministerial review — was a mixed picture. There were many positive aspects: over the past decade, the number of children worldwide who were not enrolled in school had plummeted, and the rate of primary school enrolment in developing countries, including in sub-Saharan Africa, was up sharply. Despite all the positive and promising trends, the pace of progress was not rapid enough, and certainly not rapid enough to achieve the goal of universal primary education by 2015. And without basic quality standards, increased access to education would not guarantee good results. Thus, the meeting was chiefly concerned with determining how to achieve access and quality.

Mr. Nikhil Seth, Director, Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, described a number of challenges to improving access and quality and achieving an effective educational system. Remote schools, the lack of good access roads as well as armed conflicts and insecurity considerably curtail access. Financing schools and releasing more funding for primary education entail sacrifices elsewhere. Creating incentives to attract and retain good students is key. But there is also a need to find decent work for graduates of the educational system. Long-lasting changes must come from the countries concerned, but United Nations meetings such as the annual ministerial review can create a positive dynamic.

The statement by Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission of Africa (ECA), which was read by Ms. Thokozile Ruzvidzo, Director of the African Centre for Gender and Social Development, noted that although there has been a considerable increase in primary school enrolment in Africa, that progress is not enough. In the new international economy, African children and youth need more than a primary-level education. Global participation in higher education is weak, and youth from vulnerable groups, such as girls; persons living with disabilities; persons living in rural, remote and marginalized areas; persons living in conflict or post-conflict zones; and orphans, have little chance of completing higher levels of education owing to limited access to institutions and limited financial resources, among other challenges. Investing in human capital by training and developing the skills of children and youth is critically important to Africa.

The statement by Ms. Lalla Ben Barka, Assistant Director-General for the Africa Department of UNESCO, which was read by Ann Thérèse Ndong-Jatta, Director of the UNESCO Office in Dakar/Regional Bureau for Education in Africa (BREDA), highlighted the right of all African children to a quality education, regardless of their sex, religion, ethnicity, social status or geographic origin. Given that every human being has the right to education, Governments, development agencies, civil society organizations and all other stakeholders must make every effort to promote Education for All in all regions, particularly for girls and women and in rural areas or areas where serious educational gaps have been observed. Governments must channel their efforts into research and implementing best practices, following a rights-based approach to quality education.

In his keynote address, H.E. Mr. Gilbert Foussoun Houngbo, Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic, speaking on behalf of the Head of State, said that it was a great honour for his country to host the important meeting and cordially welcomed all participants. He hailed the objectives of the meeting and the shared approach taken by countries to respond to the challenges and goals of Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Togo had implemented various measures to improve access to and the quality of education. Those measures included making preschool and primary school free of charge, reopening teacher training colleges, instituting remedial training for primary schoolteachers with no basic training and progressively transferring the management of community schools to the State. In the context of reforming educational systems and reprofiling them to reflect the development of science and technology and the values of solidarity, citizenship and ethics, teachers have once again been defined as central to quality and equity. The Prime Minister urged meeting participants to come up with concrete recommendations aimed at improving quality and access, and to propose a common African position in preparation for the July session of the Economic and Social Council, to be held in Geneva.

B. Session I: Education and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals: Progress, Challenges and the Path to Equity

Session I was introduced by H.E. Mr. Njallay, Deputy Minister of Education, Science and Technology of Sierra Leone. Despite the efforts undertaken by the Government of Sierra Leone to guarantee free access to education, school supplies and expanded school coverage, quality-related issues had emerged that need to be addressed and call for innovative actions.

The presentation by Mr. Kishore Singh, United Nations Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on the right to education, focused on the essential role education plays in achieving the MDGs. He particularly emphasized the need for all countries to incorporate the right to education into their legislation and to ensure that this right serves as the basis for fulfilling all of the commitments made to achieve the objectives of Education for All and the MDGs.

Professor Mzobanzi Mboya of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), affirmed at the outset of his statement that education can help eradicate poverty and improve democracy and social stability. Significant resources must therefore be allocated to this sector. In addition, qualifying and professional training for teachers must be ensured and, in order to guarantee that educational systems are

inclusive in practice, curricula must be adapted to learners' individual needs and socio-economic circumstances, while integrating a gender perspective and responding to the specific needs of certain types of learners.

Ms. Yumiko Yokozeki, representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Western and Central African Regional Office, emphasized the significant disparities between countries in conflict, post-conflict countries, rural areas and urban areas, and rich countries. She noted the call to identify all the issues and take action to resolve such disparities.

Following the presentations, Mr. Gorgui Sow, Regional Coordinator of the Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA), opened the discussion, reminding Governments and technical and financial partners of the commitments undertaken at the World Education Forum, held in Dakar, with regard to exercising the right to education. He called on Governments to find innovative sources of financing for education and to establish an African foundation for the right to education. In addition, he affirmed that no financial or international crisis must undermine financing for education.

The discussion culminated in the following recommendations:

- Lay the groundwork for conditions involving all actors (teachers, civil society, communities, unions, parents, students) in reforming educational systems;
- Integrate the adaptation of schools to their environments; poverty reduction; gender issues; the values of solidarity, tolerance and citizenship; and the protection of vulnerable children into the partnership;
- Promote the political will and commitment to provide financial support for the reforms under way in the education sector;
- Ensure that there is a linkage between the right to education and employment;
- Link education and environmental development.

C. Session II: Rights-based approach to inclusive quality education

Session II was introduced by H.E. Ms. Marie Odile Bonkoungou, Minister of Basic Education and Literacy of Burkina Faso. After presenting the state of play of the Government's universal education initiatives, she outlined steps for improving the quality of education in Burkina Faso. These include:

- Introducing national languages as languages of instruction;
- Taking into account emerging issues;
- Increasing the number of credit hours;
- Expanding the number of teacher training institutes;
- Eliminating school fees;
- Furnishing school textbooks;
- Allocating funds for school administration to communities.

However, the issues before the Government are complex and involve, inter alia:

- Ensuring that teachers are on board with the establishment of new programmes;
- Involving the core committee in managing schools;
- Adopting approaches to comprehensive teacher training.

Ms. Anne Thérèse Ndong-Jatta, Director of UNESCO/BREDA was the first speaker after the introductory remarks. According to the Director of BREDA, achieving the objectives of Education for All and the MDGs will clearly depend on how committed Governments and various stakeholders are to that end. Improving quality is linked to political, cultural, material, and, especially, educational factors, all of which entail lifelong learning initiatives. In order to raise the level of student performance, actors must reach a consensus on the steps needed to improve the quality of education. The current system does not help graduates transition into working life. Education must be re-evaluated, taking into account society's values. It thus becomes important to establish links between home and school, including by employing the national language as the language of instruction in educational systems.

Mr. Mustapha Darboe, Regional Director for Southern, Eastern and Central Africa of the World Food Programme (WFP) recalled that WFP considered poverty to be a limiting factor for learning at school. WFP policy therefore seeks to provide dry rations to the most vulnerable families and to make significant contributions to the operation of school canteens. The Programme's new, eight-level approach takes into account the need to enhance quality and access to education.

In her presentation, Ms. Assibi Napoe of Education International stressed that violation of the right to education for children would necessarily lead to illiteracy. After enumerating some of the challenges faced by education systems, she made the following recommendations:

- Adopt an appropriate teacher recruitment and management policy;
- Improve the status of teachers;
- Ensure the availability of initial and continuing teacher training;
- Implement UNESCO Recommendations concerning the Status of Teachers;
- Develop inclusive programmes;
- Engage in dialogue with all partners.

Following the presentations, Ms. Thokozile Ruzvidzo, Director of the African Centre for Gender and Social Development of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, started off the discussion by underscoring that the lack of equity in the provision of education services was a major cause of the shortcomings in African education and the challenges facing it. While gender disparities were deep-seated, most countries had made progress towards achieving gender equality in primary education by 2015. Nonetheless, low retention rates among girls and young women, their limited presence in higher education and the discrimination and violence facing girls in schools were endemic in African countries.

It is therefore necessary to remove the barriers to enrolling and retaining girls and young women in school and make school a more welcoming place for girls; increase the number of female schoolteachers and train all teachers to be gender-sensitive; and address negative attitudes towards the learning abilities of girls and

inform them of their right to education in a safe and healthy environment. The ultimate objective of these measures is to offer equitable educational services to all children and young adults irrespective of gender.

The range of issues considered during the discussion concerned the contributions each country had made to improve the quality of education. After the exchange of views, the following recommendations were formulated:

- Strengthen the capacity of the various actors to improve their vision, their role in integrating schools into their environment and their effectiveness;
- Develop a joint comprehensive education plan that incorporates teacher training, status, career development plans and working conditions;
- Favour a holistic approach to education systems with strong linkages between informal and formal education.

D. Session III: Country experiences and best practices

Session III was introduced by Ms. Betty Mould-Iddrisu, Minister of Education of Ghana, and included presentations on experiences pertaining to the topics of the meeting, in particular access to schooling, quality, and management of the education system. Other salient topics directly related to the right to education, quality, equity and the mobilization of financial resources in order to guarantee equality in education for all, without exception or discrimination, were addressed.

With regard to best practices and country experiences, Ghana had included Education for All in its Constitution in 1992. Education is free and compulsory and Ghana is getting closer to reaching the Millennium Development Goals in education. Education of girls is an extremely important part of its national strategic plan. Other good practices include local scholarships for girls, school nutrition programmes, provision of bicycles for commuting to school and the construction of new schools.

Mr. Kalidou Diallo, Minister of Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education of Senegal, stressed the continent-wide adoption of national laws and education system development plans that represent significant advances in the implementation of the agreed development objectives and priorities. In addition, the elimination of primary school fees, the introduction of appropriate teaching materials and the implementation of suitable policies for initial and continuing teacher training, as well as the establishment of school canteens, have contributed significantly to improving access and retention. In many countries, this has translated into a noticeable improvement in student achievement. The positive experiences and good practices of most of the countries also include a general requirement to wear school uniforms, the granting of scholarships to disadvantaged pupils and gender equality.

The allocation of a substantial budget for education, higher salaries and benefits, better planning and greater prioritization of actions to be taken constitute good practices, as does the implementation of measures to facilitate access by teachers to private property through State subsidies or social housing programmes that correspond to their purchasing power. The adoption and application of a consistent policy of initial and continuing teacher training are positive practices that contribute towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Kenneth Gbagi, the Minister of State for Education of Nigeria, believes that good practices, such as the diversification of educational services and closer ties between community schools and students, the construction of suitable infrastructure and the recruitment of female schoolteachers have a positive impact on access to schooling and retention rates and facilitate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. These measures also improve student performance. The introduction of a nine-year core curriculum for basic education, the development of nomadic schools, the production and distribution of appropriate teaching materials as well as the involvement of communities in school management through the introduction of good governance, such as school management committees, and the development of a public-private partnership could be considerable advantages.

Mr. Mamadou Goumble, Country Senior Officer at Alcatel-Lucent for the West African subregion, including Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger, believes that making changes to certain diplomas, allocating additional resources and promoting new opportunities and ways of learning, such as digital education and the use of new technologies (communication tools such as cellular phones), contribute towards significantly improving the quality of instruction and learning in African countries. All this should lead us to envisage a paradigm shift and to rethink the mission of education systems in terms of both demand and supply, objectives, the type of teachers to be trained, curricula, length and management of the school day, the language of instruction, the new institutional framework and the new learner profile. The juxtaposition of our cultures with those that have other perspectives can be a positive experience that could benefit our education systems.

Following the presentations, Mr. Jean-Marie Ahlin Byll-Cataria, Executive Secretary of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa, launched the discussion by addressing a number of issues, including ways of ensuring quality education, what constitutes a sustainable allocation to education in the national budget and how to provide second-chance education programmes. He also noted that 18 out of 53 African countries are either conflict zones or headed for conflict, a situation that could compromise the progress achieved in education.

During the discussion, participants noted that, generally speaking, countries could draw inspiration from experiences and good practices that were time-tested and that it would be advantageous to replicate and spread. Also, with an eye to harmonizing educational policies, the strategy of pooling resources and knowledge could speed up the achievement of Education for All goals and the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, the adoption and adaptation of new models of school governance and management and new teaching and learning strategies could contribute towards the achievement of the agreed goals. Implementation of decisions and recommendations aimed at keeping step with new initiatives and approaches for which a consensus had been reached and their monitoring and assessment would guarantee success.

E. Session IV: Key policy messages for the 2011 Economic and Social Council Annual Ministerial Review

Session IV of the meeting was introduced by Mr. Jan Grauls, Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council and Permanent Representative of Belgium to the

United Nations in New York. The session focused on policy messages delivered by youth delegates and representatives of development agencies, including the African Development Bank. The session also laid the groundwork for defining future prospects.

In her statement, Ms. Marielle Degboe, a youth delegate representing Magnolia NGO, shared the vision of African youth for the future of the continent and education in particular. She highlighted the need to further improve access to education for all African children and called on development agencies and African Governments to significantly increase their budgetary allocations to education and to improve teacher training at all levels of the education system. It was also important to improve secondary education options in order to equip young people with the skills and qualifications necessary to enter the job market and develop higher education capacity in Africa so that it could prepare the human resources needed for the economy to grow.

Mr. Frank Boahene, representative of the African Development Bank, highlighted the Bank's priorities in the education sector on the African continent. In general, the Bank played a major role in economic development and poverty reduction measures. To a large extent, the Bank's support for education is strategically focused on higher education and science and technology and comprises the following priority areas:

1. Support for national and regional centres of excellence;
2. Development of higher education, science and technology infrastructure;
3. Assistance in making the transition from school to the working world, based essentially on a regional approach through a dynamic partnership that builds on the Bank's various experiences.

The subregional approach adopted clearly focuses on the establishment of community colleges in West Africa in order to scale up training; distance training for teachers in Southern Africa (major elements in policy implementation); and medical training in partnership with the Aga Khan Foundation.

The various speeches sparked many questions and reactions among participants concerning the right to education set out in the legislation of Member States, but especially the implementation of that constitutional provision. The quality of education is considered a fundamental concern for the continent at a time of economic globalization and development of knowledge economies that value the training of human capital, something that cannot happen without quality education for all, particularly those from underprivileged sectors of society. Questions were raised concerning the sustainability and operating modalities of the centres of excellence and their complementarity with those of the African Union. Those questions were answered satisfactorily.

All speakers at the session focused on the importance of education as the foundation and a critical tool for social and economic development, and emphasized the relevance of three fundamental elements:

1. Leadership at all levels of the country's political and governance hierarchy;

2. Existence of a legal framework and consistent legal instruments for the promotion of the right to education for all children in the country;

3. Existence of a strategic partnership that consolidates and coordinates all interventions at the national, subregional and continental levels.

The speeches also centred on the interplay between the following concepts:

1. Quality and quantity: take effective steps to improve the quality of education at all levels of the educational system;

2. Capacity and aptitude: put more emphasis on the cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of learning;

3. Girls and boys: promote gender equality and girls' access to education;

4. Inclusion and exclusion: facilitate access to education for all children, regardless of social status, geographic origin, religion, sex or physical condition; ensure that, at the continental level, better learning environments are provided for the 15 per cent of out-of-school children living in conditions of extreme poverty and situations of armed conflict;

5. Abundance and scarcity of resources: promote the mobilization of financial resources, in order to increase quality education services for all children in the country, particularly those from underprivileged communities living in conditions of extreme insecurity; ensure optimum use of resources and guarantee equity at all levels of the educational system.

The session ended with remarks by the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, who once again drew attention to the right to education; ultimately, that right falls under the responsibility, and is based on the commitment, of the member States, which must strictly enforce it, in accordance with their respective constitutional provisions.

F. Closing ceremony

The closing ceremony of the African regional preparatory meeting included speeches by Mr. Nikhil Seth, Director of the Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination; Professor Jean-Pierre Ezin, Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology of the African Union; and Ms. Essossimna Legzim-Balouki, Minister of Literacy and Primary and Secondary Education in Togo. The speeches dealt with the following fundamental points:

- Reaffirmation of the paramount importance of the right to education and its explicit enshrinement in the constitutions of the States members of the African Union;
- Commitment of resources in order to implement the provisions of the various legislative documents and legal instruments;
- Improvement of the quality of education at all levels of African educational systems, with a particular focus on strengthening initial and continuing teacher training, which would guarantee quality education;

- Reinforcement of equity at all levels in order to guarantee equal opportunity for all children in the country, regardless of ethnic origin, gender, religion, socio-economic status, geographic origin or physical condition;
- Mobilization of sufficient financial, human and material resources and their optimal use in order to achieve all the goals and priorities set out in the various plans and strategy papers of the member States, especially those pertaining to Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals.

III. Recommendations

- **Reaffirm the primacy of the right to education and its explicit enshrinement in the constitutions of the African Union member States; and commit resources for the implementation of the provisions of the various legislative documents and legal instruments;**
- **Improve the quality of education at all levels of African educational systems, with a particular focus on strengthening initial and continuing training for teachers, which would guarantee quality education;**
- **Reinforce equity at all levels in order to guarantee equal opportunity for all children in the country, regardless of ethnic origin, gender, religion, socio-economic status, geographical origin or physical condition;**
- **Mobilize sufficient financial, human and material resources and use them in an optimal manner in order to achieve all the goals and priorities set out in the various plans and strategy papers of the member States, especially those pertaining to Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals;**
- **Promote the political will and commitment to provide financial support for the reforms under way in the education sector;**
- **Lay the groundwork for involving all actors (teachers, civil society, communities, unions, parents, pupils) in reforming educational systems;**
- **Integrate the adaptation of schools to their environment; poverty reduction; gender issues; the values of solidarity, tolerance and citizenship; and the protection of vulnerable children into the partnership;**
- **Establish the link between the right to education and employment;**
- **Establish the link between education and environmental development;**
- **Focus more on "including the excluded", whether in cities, remote areas and nomadic communities, to complement the universal approaches for increasing net school enrolment;**
- **Eliminate school fees for primary education, with additional support for the most marginalized, drawing on the experiences and best practices of countries that have already implemented such policies;**
- **Establish a mandate for inclusive education reinforced by legal institutions;**

- **Make special efforts to enrol and retain girls, such as free school rides and appropriate sanitary facilities to promote their inclusion;**
- **Ensure that schools are welcoming and safe places for boys and girls;**
- **Introduce early-childhood and nursery-school programmes wherever possible;**
- **Expand school feeding programmes and enshrine this right in State constitutions;**
- **Strengthen capacity to recruit and retain qualified teachers; focus on teacher training, support networks and remuneration;**
- **Avoid long schooling interruptions, particularly in conflict- and disaster-ridden countries;**
- **Promote innovation and choice through initiatives such as scholarships, school vouchers and opportunities for vocational and technical education;**
- **Reach a consensus on the steps needed to ensure quality in order to raise the level of student performance;**
- **Strengthen the capacities of the different actors, to help improve their vision, their approach to adapting schools to their environments, and their effectiveness;**
- **Develop a joint comprehensive education plan that incorporates teacher training, status, career development plans and working conditions;**
- **Adopt a holistic approach to educational systems with appropriate linkages between non-formal and formal education;**
- **Adopt and adapt new school governance and management models and teaching and learning strategies in order to help achieve the agreed goals.**